

House Republican Press Release

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O'Neill Calls for Senate Investigation of Newton



Southbury Legislator says the State Senate has an Obligation to Act

HARTFORD- Representative Arthur J. O'Neill (R-Southbury) today reacted to charges of possible bribery and corruption by State Senator Ernest E. Newton (D-Bridgeport), by calling on Senate leadership to initiate an investigation.

Newton has been under investigation by the FBI and IRS for over a year. The investigation centers on Newton's alleged use of his political position to financially enrich his family, and questionable loans he accepted at a job at a Bridgeport sewage treatment plant. On Tuesday in federal court, a public official claimed that he bribed Newton in exchange for a \$100,000 state grant.

"In this instance, the state Senate has an obligation to act," said Representative O'Neill. "According to news reports Senator Newton claims that when all is said and done he will be shown to have done nothing wrong. Therefore Senator Donald Williams, as Senate President pro Tempore, needs to initiate an investigation into these allegations. If they are true, the Senate should expel Newton under the powers granted it by the state Constitution."

O'Neill noted that while Senator Newton cannot be subjected to impeachment, the Senate leader has the same responsibility that former House Speaker Moira Lyons faced when convening an inquiry panel to investigate former Governor John G. Rowland.

"The Senate alone is granted the power to police its own membership," said Representative O'Neill. "Just as the legislature did not and should not have waited for the conclusions of a federal investigation of governor Rowland, so the legislature should not wait for the results of a federal investigation in this instance. The Senate must convene an investigation of its own into these allegations, separate from the federal inquiry, and determine the truth. This will also give Senator Newton a public forum in which to tell his side of the story."

The Senate has the power to remove Newton from his seat by a two-thirds vote under the state Constitution. Senator Newton should be removed from office only after a careful investigation of the facts and a conclusion that he is guilty of official misconduct."

Representative O'Neill served as co-chairman of the Committee of Inquiry that investigated wrongdoings of Governor John Rowland in 2004. The committee was charged with reporting back to the house if grounds existed to initiate impeachment proceedings. A recommendation for impeachment never came as Rowland announced he would resign while the committee's hearings were still underway.

"This is a significant test of the legislature's will to prove its stance against corruption isn't empty rhetoric," said Representative O'Neill. "I hope the Senate passes the test."